



SPECIFICATION

LIGHT-EMITTING MATERIAL AND PRODUCING METHOD THEREOF

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TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a light-emitting material and a producing method thereof, and more particularly, to an inorganic light-emitting material using a rare-earth element as an exciting agent and having a long afterglow time, and the present invention also relates to a producing method thereof.

BACKGROUND TECHNIQUE

A light-emitting material is mixed in ink or paint to make light emitting paint, and is utilized on a safe sign and a clock board. Conventionally, copper-excited zinc sulfide (ZnS: Cu) was widely used as the light-emitting material. ZnS: Cu has high light-emitting efficiency in the light-emitting spectral region, but its brightness is lowered extremely rapidly, and the visible afterglow time is as short as 20 to 30 minutes. When the ZnS: Cu is exposed to ultraviolet rays in moisture environment, the material is decomposed and degenerated and the body color of the material darkens. Therefore, there are constraints for using ZnS: Cu outside, and optimal material as a substitute for ZnS: Cu had long been required.

In CN1053807A, a light-emitting material ($m(Sr_{1-x}Eu_x)O \cdot nAl_2O_3 \cdot yB_2O_3$) having long afterglow ability and is laid open.

In the above general formula, $1 \leq m \leq 5$, $1 \leq n \leq 8$, $0.005 \leq y \leq 0.35$ and $0.001 \leq x \leq 0.1$. The afterglow time of this light-emitting material is in a range from 10 to 20 hours.

In USP5,376,303, phosphor having long afterglow ability comprises a compound ($MO_a(Al_{1-b}B_b)_2O_3 \cdot cR$).

In this general formula, $0.5 \leq a \leq 10.0$, $0.0001 \leq b \leq 0.5$, $0.0001 \leq c \leq 0.2$, MO is at least one compound selected from a group consisting of MgO, CaO, SrO and ZnO. R consists Eu

and at least one additive rare-earth element selected from a group consisting of Pr, Nd, Dy and Tm.

In the above-mentioned patent, some phosphors such as $\text{SrO}_{2.10}(\text{Al}_{0.952}\text{B}_{0.048})_2\text{O}_3$: 0.005Eu, 0.020Dy (which will be referred to as "A" hereinafter), and $\text{SrO}_{1.025}(\text{Al}_{0.976}\text{B}_{0.024})_2\text{O}_3$: 0.005Eu, 0.015Dy (which will be referred to as "B" hereinafter) were prepared, and residual light-emitting time and brightness of these phosphors were evaluated to find out the afterglow time constant (n) and relative brightness (comparing with ZnS: Cu, Cl). A measuring result shows that the afterglow time constants of A and B phosphors and ZnS: Cu, Cl are 0.94, 0.86 and 1.26, respectively, and phosphorus brightness after 10 seconds are 144, 220 and 100, respectively, and phosphorus brightness after 20 seconds are 934, 1320 and 100, respectively.

It is found that the afterglow time and brightness of these A and B phosphors are clearly improved as compared with ZnS: Cu, Cl , but they are not yet in practical use.

Thereupon, the present inventors conducted various researches for producing light-emitting material using rare-earth element Eu as the light-emitting material. Based on the researches, the present inventors found that a light-emitting material having a new crystallization structure was obtained by adding an appropriate amount of B and an additive exciting agent Dy. This light-emitting material has a desired long afterglow time and high brightness.

Therefore, a first object of the present invention is to provide a light-emitting material having a long afterglow time and high brightness.

Moreover, a second object of the present invention is to provide a producing method of the above-mentioned light-emitting material.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

To achieve the objects, the present invention provides the following light-emitting material and the producing

method.

That is, a light-emitting material of the present invention includes a dipophase compound crystallization expressed in a general formula: $(\text{Sr, Eu, Dy})_{0.95 \pm x}(\text{Al, B})_2\text{O}_{3.95 \pm x} \cdot (\text{Sr, Eu, Dy})_{4-x}(\text{Al, B})_{14}\text{O}_{25-x}$ ($x=0.01 \sim 0.1$).

This dipophase compound has a new crystallization structure and consists of two phases, i.e., $(\text{Sr, Eu, Dy})_{0.95 \pm x}(\text{Al, B})_2\text{O}_{3.95 \pm x}$ and $(\text{Sr, Eu, Dy})_{4-x}(\text{Al, B})_{14}\text{O}_{25-x}$. This conclusion was obtained from XRD (X-ray diffraction) analysis using a large amount of samples carried out in chemical laboratory of crystallization structure and crystallization in a material scientific division in Chinese geological university. Based on the XRD analysis, and using an optical microscope and electronic probe analytical technique, it was corroborated that the above two phases are symbiosis and have light-emitting function.

The producing method of the light-emitting material includes the following steps:

- (1) step for measuring previously pulverized raw materials, and mixing them to obtain a mixture of raw material,
- (2) step for putting the mixture into a container, heating the mixture from 850°C to 1200°C for three hours under a reduction condition, keeping the temperature for five to six hours, thereby obtaining a sintered body,
- (3) step for stopping the heating operation and cooling the sintered body naturally down to a room temperature, and
- (4) step for pulverizing the sintered body to obtain a product.

According to the light-emitting material and the producing method of the present invention, visible long afterglow ability can be obtained as compared with a similar light-emitting material.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

In an assessment process concerning a phase of a light-emitting material of the present invention, using analytic means such as an X-ray fluorescent analysis, a plasma

spectral analysis, electronic probe and X-ray photoelectron energy spectrum, it was confirmed that a content of B element in dipophase compound was 0.2~1.0 % by weight, and variable ranges of contents of Eu element and Dy were from 0.5 to 3.0 % by weight and from 0.01 to 3.0 % by weight, respectively.

The element B exists in the entire crystallization structure. Moreover, the element B exists in a form of B-O tetrahedral coordination or BO₃ triangular coordination. The BO₃ triangular coordination can substitute a portion of Al-O octahedron and this causes instability in the crystallization structure. This is an important structural feature of the light-emitting material of the present invention.

Further, the Al-O octahedron and Al-O tetrahedron concurrently exist in the dipophase compound crystallization of the present invention, and form a substantially hexagonal ring and positive ions of Sr, Eu and Dy are charged into a cavity of the ring. As compared with the entire crystallization dipophase compound, the amount of Al is excessively large and the amount of (Sr, Eu, Dy) is too small.

The raw materials which is used for the producing method of the light-emitting material of the present invention are SrCO₃, Al₂O₃, H₃BO₃, Eu₂O₃ and Dy₂O₃, of which, Eu³⁺ of Eu₂O₃ is reduced to Eu²⁺ during sintering process to excite the dipophase compound and provide the same with a light-emitting function. Dy₂O₃ strengthens the exciting effect of Eu₂O₃ as an additive exciting agent.

The term "reduction condition" used in the present invention means to reduce the above-mentioned mixed raw material using carbon powder, or to reduce the mixed raw material using mixture gas of nitrogen and hydrogen of volume ratio of 4:1.

The light-emitting material produced by the invention has faint yellow-green color. When this light-emitting material is irradiated with sunlight, a fluorescent light or the other artificial light source and excited, the main peak

of the light-emitting spectrum is $505\text{ }\mu\text{m}$, and shows blue or green.

As a result of measurement of samples, it was found that the light-emitting material of the present invention showed brightness of about 8500mcd/m^2 after five seconds from the instant when the irradiation was stopped, and visible afterglow time was 80 hours or longer (see Table 1). As shown in Table 1, the light-emitting material produced by the method of the present invention has especially excellent visible afterglow time.

The brightness is measured by the following method. That is, 0.2g of sample is put in a plastic plate of 10mm diameter and it is irradiated with a fluorescent light of 15w for 15 minutes from a perpendicular distance of 20cm at a room temperature and under humidity of 25RH%, and brightness of each sample is measured at various time points using an luminance meter (TOPCONBM-5, Japan TOPCON Inc.).

The light-emitting material produced by the method of the present invention has apparently long afterglow time in comparison with similar other products. Therefore, this material can suitably be applied to articles or safe sign which need to be seen in the dark, for example, a fireplug of a fire extinguishing tools and material, a handrail of safe stairs, and a road.

The following embodiments are for explaining the present invention in more detail, and are for limiting the invention.
[First Embodiment]

Previously pulverized 372.89g of SrCO_3 , 220.32g of Al_2O_3 , 12.616g of H_3BO_3 , 2.42g of Eu_2O_3 , and 0.157g of Dy_2O_3 were measured and sufficiently mixed.

The mixed raw material was put into a container and it was covered with carbon powder, and heated from 850°C to 1200°C for three hours to increase its temperature, and the temperature was maintained for six hours. Then, the mixture was naturally cooled down to a room temperature to obtain a sintered body. The obtained sintered body was pulverized into

such small pieces that all the pieces could pass through 200 mesh, thereby obtaining a product.

The product obtained in this manner had initial brightness of 3850mcd/m² for 30 seconds and afterglow time was 85 hours.

In the obtained produce, a value of x in the general formula was 0.01.

[Second Embodiment].

Previously pulverized 409.79g of SrCO₃, 220.32g of Al₂O₃, 12.616g of H₃BO₃, 2.96g of Eu₂O₃, and 0.164g of Dy₂O₃ were measured and sufficiently mixed.

The mixed raw material was put into a container and it was covered with carbon powder, and heated from 850°C to 1000°C for three hours to increase its temperature, and the temperature was maintained for six hours. Then, the mixture was naturally cooled down to a room temperature to obtain a sintered body. The obtained sintered body was pulverized into such small pieces that all the pieces could pass through 200 mesh, thereby obtaining a product.

The product obtained in this manner had initial brightness of 3990mcd/m² for 30 seconds and afterglow time was 80 hours.

In the obtained produce, a value of x in the general formula was 0.01.

Table 1

Measurement of brightness (mcd/m²) and calculation of standard deviation

| Time | Sample No. | | | | | Calculation of standard deviation | Relative standard deviation |
|---------|------------|------|------|------|------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | |
| 5 s | 8400 | 8450 | 8400 | 8500 | 8500 | 8430 | 4.5 |
| 10 s | 7380 | 7570 | 7420 | 7410 | 7320 | 7460 | 0.5% |
| 20 s | 5120 | 5130 | 4930 | 5170 | 4870 | 5044 | 1.8% |
| 30 s | 4030 | 3960 | 3850 | 3990 | 3820 | 3930 | 2.7% |
| 40 s | 3380 | 3230 | 3160 | 3310 | 3110 | 3238 | 2.3% |
| 60 s | 2550 | 2490 | 2430 | 2490 | 2420 | 2476 | 3.4% |
| 90 s | 1870 | 1820 | 1780 | 1830 | 1750 | 1810 | 2.1% |
| 3min | 1520 | 1470 | 1460 | 1480 | 1420 | 1470 | 2.6% |
| 4 min | 870 | 850 | 840 | 840 | 820 | 844 | 2.4% |
| 5 min | 760 | 740 | 720 | 730 | 700 | 730 | 2.1% |
| 3 min | 630 | 630 | 610 | 610 | 590 | 614 | 3.0% |
| 15 min | 330 | 310 | 300 | 310 | 290 | 308 | 2.8% |
| 30 min | 160 | 150 | 140 | 140 | 130 | 144 | 4.9% |
| 60 min | 70 | 70 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 64 | 8.3% |
| 90 min | 50 | 40 | 40 | 50 | 40 | 44 | 8.6% |
| 120 min | 40 | 40 | 30 | 40 | 30 | 36 | 12.5% |
| 180 min | 20 | 30 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 22 | 15.3% |
| 240 min | 20 | 20 | 10 | 20 | 20 | 18 | 20.5% |
| 360 min | 20 | 10 | 10 | 20 | 10 | 14 | 25.0% |
| 480 min | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 33.6% |
| | | | | | | 0 | 0 |